

Message Text

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44

ACTION SS-30

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INFO USINT ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT CAIRO

AMEMBASSY RABAT

S E C R E T TUNIS 6264

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TS, XF, US

SUBJECT: NEWSOM VISIT TO TUNISIA

AMMAN FOR SECRETARY

FROM ASSISTANT SECRETARY NEWSOM

1. SUMMARY. IN FURTHER CONVERSATIONS NOVEMBER 7, TUNISIAN OFFICIALS STRESSED IMPORTANCE TO THEM OF PALESTINIANS AND SYRIANS IN ANY APPROACH TO NEAR EAST SETTLEMENT. MASMOUDI OBVIOUSLY, HOWEVER, PROMOTING ARAB SUMMIT. MASMOUDI ALSO HOSTILE TOWARD HUSSEIN. END SUMMARY.

2. IN FURTHER CONVERSATIONS NOVEMBER 7, I MET WITH PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA, FOREIGN MINISTER MASMOUDI AND HABIB BOURGUIBA, JR.

3. PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA REPEATED IN LARGE MEASURE TUNISIAN POSITION AS PRESENTED TO SECRETARY PREVIOUS EVENING BY PRESIDENT. MASMOUDI FILLED IN WITH IMPRESSIONS OF LATEST TRIP TO CAIRO. PRINCIPAL POINTS WERE:

(A) BOUMEDIENE AND OTHERS MAKING STRONG EFFORT GET AGREEMENT
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ON ARAB SUMMIT WHICH WOULD SOLIDIFY POSITION OF ARABS AND DETERMINE ROLE OF PALESTINIANS IN DISCUSSION. SADAT, HOWEVER, STILL HOLDING OUT.

(B) SYRIA IS KEY TO EFFORTS TOWARD PEACE AND IS PRESENTLY UNDER PRESSURE FROM IRAQ FOR A UNION.

(C) ARABS WILL NOT ACCEPT PALESTINIAN DELEGATION TO PEACE TALKS AS PART OF JORDAN. HUSSEIN HAS LOST MUCH BY HIS UNWILLINGNESS TO OPEN UP THIRD FRONT ALTHOUGH HE HAD PROMISED SADAT TO DO SO. SADAT TOLD MASMOUDI HUSSEIN HAD "GONE BACK ON HIS WORD", FORCING ASSAD TO ACCEPT IRAQI TROOPS.

(D) QADHAFI'S POSITION IN LIBYA REMAINS STRONG. IT HAS NOT BEEN WEAKENED BY RECENT EVENTS.

(E) GREAT IMPORTANCE SHOULD BE ATTACHED TO ANNOUNCING DATE SOONEST FOR BEGINNING NEGOTIATIONS. OTHERWISE MOMENTUM OF PRESENT SITUATION WILL BE LOST.

(F) ARABS ARE CONVINCED OIL IS AN IMPORTANT WEAPON, AND ONE SHOULD BE CAUTIOUS IN ADVOCATING THAT IT NOT BE USED SINCE ARABS FEEL IT IS HAVING EFFECT. WHEN ISRAEL ABANDONS OCCUPIED LANDS, FEISAL PREPARED DOUBLE OR TRIPLE OIL PRODUCTION.

4. AS OCCASIONS AROSE, I EMPHASIZED SECRETARY'S POINT ABOUT RISK OF APPLYING PRESSURE AGAINST U.S. SUBSEQUENT TO MEETING, PRESIDENT SENT AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE HEDDA TO ME TO SAY TUNISIA WILLING INTERVENE WITH OTHER ARABS ON THIS QUESTION IF WE COULD INDICATE HOW AND WHERE IT COULD MOST EFFECTIVELY BE DONE. I ALSO MADE SPECIAL POINT THAT WHILE WE DID NOT WISH COMMENT ON SUMMIT PROPOSAL, IT WOULD NOT BE HELPFUL TO SECRETARY'S EFFORTS TO HAVE MEETING WHICH WOULD PASS ANTI-AMERICAN RESOLUTIONS OR WOULD SO TIE HANDS OF NEGOTIATORS THAT NEGOTIATIONS BECOME DIFFICULT.

5. COMMENT: MY IMPRESSIONS OF VISIT TO TUNISIA: PRESIDENT WAS TIRED AND GAVE IMPRESSION OF LESS VIGOR THAN DURING MY LAST VISIT. HE WILL CONTINUE SPEAK OUT IN ORIGINAL AND RELATIVELY MODERATE TERMS BUT HE IS NOT LIKELY BE MAJOR INFLUENCE IN PEACE NEGOTIATIONS. MASMOUDI IS MORE OF AN
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ADVOCATE FOR PALESTINIANS THAN USEFUL CHANNEL TO THEM. HIS ROLE AND EFFORTS OF OTHERS TO PROMOTE SUMMIT AND CAUSE OF PALESTINIANS IS FORETASTE OF GRAVE DIFFICULTIES FACING SADAT AND NEGOTIATORS FROM MANY NOT DIRECTLY CONCERNED WHO WILL TRY TO JOIN THE ACT. WE SHOULD REPLY TO PRESIDENT ON HOW HE CAN BE HELPFUL ON OIL EMBARGO, PERHAPS AFTER SECRETARY'S VISIT RIYADH.
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